



THE SUN

Test-Ban Critics

If the critics of this country's approach to the problem of a nuclear test-ban treaty—an approach developed consistently through the Eisenhower and the Kennedy administrations—favor a dropping of the whole effort, they ought to say so in plain words. If they believe, as their complaints come very close to suggesting, that the test-ban position of the present Administration is either stupid or treasonable, or both, they ought to say so outright. If they are certain that their comments on the technicalities of inspection are accurate, they ought to come forward with the evidence, in order that the rest of us may be despairingly certain too.

The Republican National Committee speaks of "a parade of concessions" and a "giveaway" to the Soviet Union, and seems to base the accusation on reductions in the number of on-site inspections the United States demands: the number, once twenty, has been reduced to about seven—depending on Soviet concessions giving inspectors movement in and out of Russia. Senator Dodd of Connecticut, a Democrat, goes still further, charging that concessions to date have "already cost us our nuclear superiority" and that such a ban as the United States is now willing to accept would enable the Russians, through secret testing, to achieve superiority themselves.

To all this the Administration's policy makers on arms control answer that advances in technology have reduced the number of inspection sites necessary for safety, that testing is but one aspect of weapons development and that secret testing would be strictly limited in usefulness to the tester. They urge also the view that a test-ban treaty could be one method—

though only one—for restricting the future production of nuclear weapons.

The ordinary citizen simply cannot know. But the case for technological advances makes sense, and the contention that secret testing alone could not make Russia world-dominant in nuclear weapons is reasonable. What the public can be sure of, we believe, is that the officials responsible in this subject are not deliberately selling the United States into nuclear slavery, and that their scientific and technical advisers are not dolts.

Granted that the chances for a test-ban treaty soon are poor, and that each glimmer of possible progress gets darkened over almost as soon as it appears, the bleaker way by far would be to abandon all hope of any control, ever, on the weapons that could destroy mankind. That would be more than bleak: Despair of such profundity would be madness.